CITY OF PORTSMOUTH NH
MEETING NOTES
Portsmouth Energy Advisory Committee
Wednesday, January 25, 2023

1. Roll call – In person: Councilor John Tabor, chair; Council Kate Cook, Kevin Charette, Ben D'Antionio, Allison Tanner, Tom Rooney, Peter Somssich, Peter Britz, Stephanie Seacord, recording secretary. Absent: Peter Rice

2. Councilor Tabor recapped the Jan 18 meeting with discussion following

Councilor: PEAC learned that is beneficial for Portsmouth to launch PCP earlier (June) than the previously anticipated fall launch because of advantageous rates (lower than the expected Aug hikes). Launching in fall prevents Portsmouth from contributing to the CPCNH reserves due to the higher rates in fall. Waiting until spring 2024 also precludes Portsmouth customers from receiving 10 months of rate advantages over the default. Launching in June also sustains the momentum of growing public awareness, including from the survey and the Feb 2 and 9 public hearings.

Kevin commented that pursuing approval of the EAP now is not very different from the previous timeline. Once PEAC includes any information gleaned from the two public sessions, the EAP can go to the City Council on Feb 13 and to the PUC on or around Feb 10 for its 60-day review (around Apr 10), thus allowing the 30-day notification window for a potential launch in June. That gives Portsmouth customers experience with the program before the rate changes in Aug.

Peter S expressed concern that the accelerated time frame might cause public confusion – the sense that we rushed things. Kevin noted PEAC has between Feb and Jun for public awareness and education and that Portsmouth will benefit from the publicity surrounding the first wave (including neighboring Rye, Durham and Exeter) and planned by CleanEnergy NH. Councilor Tabor included PDF of Seacoast wave 1 publicity plans in the meeting packet. Kevin noted there are also updated FAQs for use by PEAC.

Kevin presented new information from the CPCNH on Jan 25 suggests that wave 1 may not launch until mid-April instead of Apr 1 because Ascend has not yet received data from all the wave 1 suppliers (e.g. Liberty). Wave 1 will be sending their customer notification letters in mid-Mar (30 days before launch).

Allison offered the motion, seconded by Peter S, that "The Portsmouth Energy Advisory Committee complete the EAP and submit it to the PUC and Council on a timeline to launch in June." The vote was unanimous.

Tom commented that Portsmouth will have just 2 months to watch the roll-out of wave 1, rather than 6-8 months. Kevin commented that even after EAP approvals, Portsmouth can still withdraw/hold right up

until signing the services agreement activating the CPCNH Risk Management Committee on Portsmouth's behalf. There are many off-ramps in subsequent contract phases. Even (with adjustments) during the 3-year contract.

Councilor Cook asked if the City of Portsmouth legal team has reviewed the EAP and CPCNH contracts. Councilor Tabor will be briefing the City Attorney. Peter B is finalizing the EAP [completed Jan 27] – which will be posted to the meeting materials on the City website by Jan 31.

Henry H and Kevin are finalizing the PowerPoint presentation.

Feb 2 hearing agenda (45 minutes presentation/45 minutes Q&A):
Councilor Tabor, welcome, introduce Kevin as member of CPCNH and then Henry
Henry H powerpoint presentation on CPCNH and PCP opportunity
Allison, powerpoint presentation summarizing survey results
Q&A – give and take answers on the spot

Ben: the object is public education and issues/questions that require editing EAP.
Councilor Tabor: not going through EAP at hearing – PEAC will take what we hear and apply to the EAP.

Will relocate the hearing into Council Chambers if Conf Room A capacity (40) is reached.

Hearings (and survey) are being publicized in the City Newsletter, press release, Councilor Tabor's op-ed and across City social media channels. Will send a reminder on 2/2 and 2/9 hearings to the emails collected from survey participants.

Meeting adjourned at 5:58 pm

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2. Update on CPCNH launch windows - Committee and Samuel Golding of CPCNH

CPCNH advice, based on the historical patterns of seasonal rates, suggests that Fall is not a good time to launch a Community Power Aggregate, especially in Year One, because:

a. The consumer would not benefit as much from the rate, which would be counterproductive to encouraging others to support Portsmouth Community Power and its other benefits.
b. the new CPA (i.e. Portsmouth) would not be able to contribute to CPCPNH reserves. In fact, the delta between the rates might cause Portsmouth to need to draw on those reserves in order to meet its promised goal of a consumer rate lower than the Eversource.
c. CPCNH early startup fixed costs would be borne by a smaller number of members

Benefits:

a. Apr-Jun is the strongest time to launch to earn the benefits of Community Power
b. Portsmouth contributes to the reserves
c. Portsmouth consumers get 10 months of savings they would not realize if Portsmouth launches in spring 2024.

Per Sam Golding, lead technical consultant for Ascend: Portsmouth could do June, or take the most conservative course and wait until Spring 2024.

3. Discussion

Kevin noted the timeline for a go-live in June is not really more aggressive than PEAC is already pursuing in preparing the EAP for review by the PUC in February. Although that is taking the 60 days allowed per the law, the timing could still allow for a June launch.

Q. How would Portsmouth's 'go-live' in June – with a 2 months' shorter window to contribute to reserves -- impact CPCNH cash flow?
A. There would be an impact, but still allow Portsmouth to contribute to the reserves between June and October.

Ben commented that the Eversource rate pattern is a proxy for CPCNH and actual portfolio risk management must look at variable costs guided by daily alerts and monthly actuals.

We will know what the Aug rate reset will be by July to judge if PCP rates are still better than Eversource. PEAC will also still have 2 months to observe the 'wave 1' experience with customer service, billing, etc.

Allison expressed concern that the accelerated timetable might not be enough for sufficient public awareness and might open the city to accusations of 'trying to pull something over.' Peter agreed that a perception that the City was forcing something could have a material impact on PCP's success.

Kevin noted that PCP will receive the advantage of CPCNH outreach and publicity on behalf of the 'wave 1' group. And that it would also be advantageous to build on the public education and community engagement momentum that is building now, instead of suspending progress for a year. Need to focus on all the right reasons: green energy and stability not only lower rates.

Chairman Tabor suggested that PEAC proceed with preparing the EAP for PUC and parallel Council review. The only change is the public hearings need to move to Feb 2 and the Feb 9 to be included in the EAP which must go to the PUC by Feb 10.

The Chair asked each member what s/he thought and there was a clear majority to launch in June. After further discussion there was full agreement to proceed with readying the EAP, watch the April wave 1 experience and see what the rates look like for a June launch.

4. Public Comment – None.

Adjourned at 6:10 pm.